

Lynn Sweet: Immigration-reform deal could pass by August: Pelosi

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Nancy Pelosi

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WASHINGTON — House Democratic Leader Nancy Pelosi (D-Calif.), who hits Chicago this week along with President Barack Obama for fund-raising events to benefit Illinois House Democrats, told me Monday that there is enough “general agreement” on bipartisan immigration reform for a measure to pass — and she laid out an aggressive timetable, saying a bill could be sent to Obama to sign by August.

Pelosi also underscored in our interview that she wants the House to have its own bipartisan immigration bill. The Senate bipartisan measure is already out of committee and set to hit the Senate floor in June. If people in Washington thought otherwise — that she wanted to wait on the Senate (and I have read some stories with that suggestion) — they are wrong.

“We can be working simultaneously,” she told me in the phone interview, speaking from San Francisco, where she marked Memorial Day.

While the House bipartisan immigration proposals will likely end up being more conservative than the legislation already advanced in the Democratic-controlled Senate, Pelosi wants a House bill for a practical reason: To get to 218 votes in the GOP-run House — and assuming massive Democratic support — there has to be something in the immigration bill to get the support of about 30 Republicans.

That’s also the pragmatic position of Rep. Luis Gutierrez (D-Ill.), one of eight members of the House bipartisan task force. Gutierrez “has really been our champion,” Pelosi said. “He has been a real force.”

Pelosi lands in Chicago on Tuesday for two days of fund-raising and, time permitting, the Rolling Stones concert Tuesday night at the United Center.

On Tuesday, Pelosi will be the keynoter at a “Women for Brad” reception at the Hilton Northbrook for freshman Rep. Brad Schneider (D-Ill.), who is heading toward a 10th District rematch in 2014 with former Rep. Bob Dold, a Republican. The chief co-hosts are the four Democratic women in the Illinois delegation: Reps. Jan Schakowsky, Tammy Duckworth, Cheri Bustos and Robin Kelly.

On Wednesday morning, Pelosi will team up with Schakowsky and Kelly at Loyola University for a forum with Women Employed, the Women’s Business Development Center and other related groups to discuss creating more jobs for women.

Obama flies here Wednesday for two major fund-raising events to help the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee, the House political operation. The tab ranges from \$1,000 for a ticket to \$50,000 for those who can “bundle” donations from their own social, professional or political contacts.

The main event is at the Chicago Hilton, 720 S. Michigan. Major donors are invited to a dinner hosted by BettyLu and Paul Saltzman. BettyLu Saltzman holds an important place in Obama’s political history: She was one of the first major fund-raisers and Democratic activists who saw in him — when he was starting his political career in Chicago — a future president.

For the 2014 cycle, Obama so far has agreed to headline eight events for the DCCC — two of them to be held jointly with the Democratic Senate political shop.

Chicago will be the third stop on that commitment; Obama has appeared at DCCC events in San Francisco and New York this year.

House Democrats had a great year in Illinois in 2012: The 18-member delegation has 12 Democrats and six Republicans. The National Republican Congressional Committee has targeted four Illinois Democrats elected last year for defeat in 2014: Reps. Schneider, Bill Foster, William Enyart and Cheri Bustos.

Pelosi and the DCCC are defending those seats — and have targeted GOP Illinois freshman Rep. Rodney Davis for defeat, raising money for former Madison County Judge Ann Callis.

“Money raised in Illinois,” Pelosi said, “stays in Illinois.”

As for immigration, Pelosi is optimistic that obstacles that may loom large now can be bridged — after the House and Senate pass their own bills and the two chambers come together to reconcile the different versions.

In predicting August passage, Pelosi said support “may be not by everybody, but by enough.”

<http://www.suntimes.com/news/sweet/20378242-452/lynn-sweet-immigration-reform-deal-could-pass-by-august-nancy-pelosi-says.html>